

BELIEVED BELIEF

Science/Religion versus Sukuma Magic

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Abstract: Typically, magic takes no stance against the socialized beliefs that determine it, in contrast with both science and modern religion, which, in the face of doubt, assert the truth-value of their propositions against such determination. In other words, science and religion engage in 'believed belief'. Their aversion to magical belief is the one thing they can agree on. Believed beliefs produce convictions of truth sufficiently intense to base actions on, such as the killing of someone identified as a witch. Ethnography on Sukuma healing allows us to distinguish this experience of the witch from that of oracles and magical remedies. While research in terms of belief(s) tends to oppose cultures, an approach based on experiential structures links up seemingly distinct practices from different cultures, while differentiating seemingly similar practices within a culture.

Keywords: belief, divination, intrusion, magic, religion, science, Sukuma

The debate on science and religion is as old as science itself. So are questions about the place of magic in this opposition. Rather than reiterating the arguments, this article considers, in light of Sukuma practices of magic and divination, what underlies the debate: the distinction between belief and knowledge. Challenged by science in its early Baconian version of empirically verified knowledge, institutional religions have promoted their credo as something akin to knowledge, albeit it an 'inner' knowledge that defies empirical verification. Religious belief—in God, for instance—would differ from magic and other forms of superstition, which literally go 'beyond what stands', namely, beyond what is empirically known. If science and religion have anything in common, it is their antagonism toward magic. The reason, I argue, is that magic typically takes no stance against the socialized beliefs determining it, whereas both science and



religion acknowledge the threat of such determination to the truth-value of their propositions. They will assert these propositions anyway, in the face of doubt, which is why I classify both as ‘believed belief’ rather than knowledge.

Further weakening the debate’s underlying distinction, my article shows that the beliefs involved in magic cannot be opposed to knowledge. I conclude from my ethnography among Sukuma healers that the association of magic with belief is problematic for at least two reasons. First, the relevant plant recipes incorporate empirical knowledge. Secondly, these plants are supplemented with symbolic substances that acknowledge the influence of entities that cannot be known. The supplement indicates that healers are not ignorant of the difference. They just do not worry about it. The hybridity of logics evident in magic excludes preoccupation with heresy, scientific or religious. Is this preoccupation not intrinsic to the dichotomy of knowledge versus belief? Modern science flourished while dichotomizing continued with the Cartesian divide of culture and nature in academic knowledge, reproduced in the division of anthropology. Here too something may be said in favor of magic. Whereas natural scientists describe nature as if culture would play no role in the author’s description, and scholars on the other side of the divide do the same with culture while forgetful about the role of nature, the healer typically connects opposites and defies divides in ways that modern reason would call impure. The scientist’s segregation of these spheres—like discussing fish in isolation from the sea—has proved to be efficient for knowledge but not necessarily as a way of life, the very thing magic trades in.

The healer’s open-textured position accords well with the reflexive stance developed in our postmodern, eco-sensitive age. Outsiders might wrongly take this alliance in attitude toward belief/knowledge as an alliance in content of belief/knowledge, as if postmodern anthropologists would have to defend the verdict of an African witchcraft tribunal. Anthropologists have themselves to blame for the confusion, since no serious attempt has been made as yet to develop an epistemology of healing, meaning, and matter that allows for intercultural comparison and comprehension. Medical anthropologists are supposed to inform us about therapies in other cultures, but not with a view to confronting and possibly changing those in our own. Our postmodern openness, which cherishes each culture as incomparably unique, has sustained a positivism by default. This article proposes how to break with such positivism and thus avoid a number of antinomies continuing to bedevil our discipline. Crucial will be to realize that the seemingly objective realm of knowledge rests on believed beliefs that reveal deep emotions. Moreover, believed beliefs are not the sole mark of Enlightenment thought. Rather, they characterize the very logic by which Sukuma patients personify evil and construct their witch.

Divination: The Voyage

Sukuma herders and farmers live in semi-arid Northwest Tanzania. Their extended families keep fairly aloof from central government and usually enjoy high autonomy in the village community. Through kinship and chosen membership,

virtually all villagers partake, actively or passively, of an informal, historically rooted politico-medical system encompassing the villages. Through primary socialization, as well as more formal initiation into societies, they have access to expertise indistinguishably combining matters of social status, wealth, (mis)fortune, affliction, and ritual therapy.

In times of grave illness, but also in cases of casual fortune seeking, diviners can be consulted for diagnosis. Two kinds of divination are commonly practiced, the mediumistic type (*ng'hambo*) and the chicken oracle (*buchemba wa ngoko*). The role of the ancestral spirit is most explicit in the first type. Those diviners have gained entry into their profession following an affliction caused by the ancestor summoning them to carry on his or her divining tradition. During divination these mediums either articulate diffuse thoughts received from the spirit or attempt to recollect a dream that the spirit let them have the night before. The séance starts soon after the diviner receives a euphorbia twig (*inala*). While shaking the gourd rattle or a winnowing basket containing old coins with the twig lying on top, the diviner addresses the subject in a chanting voice. A dried twig indicates that the oracle's subject, who need not be the client, has deceased; hence, the oracle concerns the cause of death. Fresh euphorbia twigs secrete a milky substance to which the subject has transmitted his or her saliva so that the medium can divine it. The medium does not know the subject's identity but should ascertain it in the oracle, whose value will depend on it.

In light of our discussion, a question arises: what is the status of the twig? Clearly of a different matter, the twig does not 'equal' the subject. And yet to say that it 'represents' the subject, like a tag or a name, does not do justice to its pivotal role. The twig is taken from a euphorbia bush growing at the outer fringes of the compound, demarcating the compound like a social body's skin. The twig is broken off from a bigger branch, from which comes the milky secretion. This is not the time to go into the kind of symbolizations that my Sukuma friends and I used to indulge in together, such as associations between the bush and the family tree of which the subject forms the outer twig, or the person's life-principle (*moyo*) flowing from the ancestors, like the sap flowing from branch to twig. The point is that although the Sukuma do not treat the twig, saliva, or sap as sacred, something real is incited by these in the mediumistic moment. Neither knowledge nor belief can offer insightful conceptual angles here; rather, we are dealing with the opening of a possibility. In addition, the fact that clients rarely limit themselves to one consultation or diviner about a particular issue suggests lingering uncertainty. Divination is approached as a trip, a voyage into the unknown, which crucially frames whatever knowledge one may retain from it.

To illustrate the point, I briefly recount the opening fragment of a recorded séance that I found to be representative of consultations attended elsewhere. After the diviner sounded the drum to announce that he was ready for a private séance, the client placed a 200 tsh (equivalent to about 0.20 euro) bill on the ground between them. The diviner's monologue (with altered voice indicated by quotation marks) began as follows:

Diviner [looking at the euphorbia twig]: Ask and it will talk. Watching the paths east and west you will tell us if there is witchcraft. Take the path to your plot back home. “No, the path is clear.” Enter the father’s compound area, then the mother’s area at the hearth stones. What is bothering the homestead? Maybe you lost something? “No.” Perhaps a goat? “The goats are there.” Perhaps sheep? “No.” Or a calf from the stable? “No,” says this oracle. Let us sit with the mothers then. With Gamawishi [female name]. “Mm, no!” This oracle could be concerning Nzagamba [male name], maybe Shigela or a young man. “No.” It is the oracle of a mature man. Once arrived at his home, we will ask him if the one concerned is the one bringing in the twig. We will ask him personally. The oracle is not a woman’s, it is a man’s. And I should probe for the illness troubling him [looks up at client].

Client: I have heard it.

Diviner: So, it isn’t true then?

Client: It is true. Just continue from there, mister.

Diviner: If the oracle were a woman’s, I would have rested my rattles. This twig concerns a man, mature, even if he has no compound, he will soon get one. Moreover, it concerns you, mister. You did not come to check on one of your family members. And it is your body you are looking at. We will ask about the illness bothering you, or maybe your future paths whether they are not good. Even to the healers your paths remain hidden and obscure, while increasing in number. When I travel your twig, you wonder, “What then is troubling me?” [whisper]. Let’s try to see his body whether he did not get ill at the feet. He will tell us how his feet started swelling, filling up by themselves. Ask whether it cooled down again. I should go over the compound area and my kin, and their life and health. There’s a man when I hold his belly it hurts; his stomach got dirty; even to pee he fails, just dry, dry. What is that illness? To excrete blood? “No” [whisper]. That is why I went to get tested. I was troubled at the waist up to the backbone. See, the snake [life-principle] has changed urine. He pees yellow. “No.” He pees blood. “No.” Or uncontrolled. “No.” Or the scrotum has swollen. “Not at all!” We shall look at potency, maybe it has diminished. That is the question of this oracle. Why is your heart usually high up, while at times you fear some person, and then you become gentle again? ... I am being told by the great grandfather [*baba nkulu*] that there is sadness in the home, the man is lacking the blessing from east and west, north and south. That is what he says: the man got ill at the feet and became dizzy at the moment of being bewitched; he then said his belly was hurting, he was talking of a cold. His whole body was in discomfort. And maybe now he is lacking strength. The head and neck were hurting. It may have been the head bothering this man. The illness, I am looking for the illness bothering him. “He suffered from his eyes, as if almost getting blind.”

Client: Not that.

Diviner: Or got dizzy and fainted.

Client: Yes.

After a long detour of what looks like informed guesswork, the diviner has found out that the oracle’s subject is the client and that the reason for consultation

is this young man's anxiety ever since he fainted. Has he lost the blessing of the ancestors (spatially expressed in 'east and west')? Is witchcraft involved? At the end of the article we return to the second part of the séance when the diviner designates causes. At this stage it is important to see that the oracle does seek to divulge truth and identify causes, but that this cannot be dissociated from the unspoken experiential frame of a search, a trip, and the trial-and-error process involved in interpreting oracular messages, as the client has witnessed himself. Instead of knowledge or belief, the twig opens a plane of possibility, which accompanies whatever certainty will be encountered in it.

Not Knowing, Not Believing

After one year of fieldwork in a Sukuma village, I was visited by Per Brandström, a friend and ethnographer who as the son of Swedish Pentecostal preachers spent his entire youth in these parts of Tanzania. When I told him about a conversation I had had the day before with an elderly Catholic missionary who was disappointed with 50 years of conversion effort in the area, Per laughed and succinctly voiced his parents' experience: "I knew many Sukuma attending church services but doubt any of them was a believer."

There are several sides to his answer. On the one hand, it tells us something about the Sukuma, a people with whom Per had come to sympathize deeply. On the other hand, it reveals our own bias as scholars talking about belief. The suggestion is that the Sukuma have a down-to-earth attitude toward life that precludes the kind of unconditional belief proper to institutional religion. Per's suggestion combines two classic comments discussed by Coleman and Lindquist (this issue). First, it recalls Lienhardt (1961) stressing the matter-of-factness of the Dinka about powers inhering in objects. Per's remark combines this with Ruel's (1997) famous comment on the particularity of European Christianity, notably its emphasis on credo and conversion. The combination clarifies why our way of posing the question of belief tends to be ethnocentric and fails to acknowledge the wisdom of the Sukuma position and of magic users in general. They embody a third position, of continuing relevance today, rather than one (espoused by Tylor, among others) that can be classified as embryonic to religion and to science.

Illustrative of the modern dichotomy, and of our trouble transcending it, is an assumption that is common in functionalist sociologies of religion and that still proves a major challenge in undergraduate teaching of anthropology. This assumption holds that African communities are comparable to the ideal-typical nineteenth-century European parish centered around the church, immersed in dogma as well as in social control and other constraints on freedom that would prevent villagers from thinking critically about their internalized beliefs. I am not arguing that Sukuma commonly criticize their own beliefs but that such a habit is not necessary to speak of intellectual freedom—perhaps rather the contrary. Moreover, any Sukuma is allowed to practice divination. Marginal or young people, instead of authorities, are considered the best talents for mediumistic consultation. No Sukuma I worked with showed irritation when

I claimed that ancestral spirits do not exist or that magic does not work. Their composure appeared to stem not from a sense of certainty or from knowing better. Their reaction was one of curiosity. They directed attention to what I might have to say about life's contingencies and invisible side (which was very little, they soon discovered). This open-textured position puts into practice what postmodern programs have merely stated. It goes beyond the 'belief versus knowledge' approach that opposes science to religion, biomedicine to traditional healing, or Western to non-Western worldviews.

I cannot tell to what extent the almost proverbial cultural flexibility of the Sukuma (cf. Brandström 1990) can be extrapolated to the rest of the continent and whether imperialist unification strategies of knowledge are singular to the West. Going by Bloch's (1989) account, royal dynasties in Madagascar concentrated traditional authority in religious centers and sanctioned their followers' beliefs. But Bantu healing cults in any case are decentralized (as are Pentecostal churches, the most successful Christian denominations in Bantu Africa). Part of their flexibility consists in the plurality of medicinal associations, which permits the accumulation of memberships. Patients consult with healers as well as with medical doctors. The plurality in epistemological stance refutes Horton's (1967) old thesis of the 'closed versus open' predicament in 'African traditional' versus 'Western modern' thought, respectively. Given how manifest the pluralist epistemology is in many dimensions of life, the local adaptation of Christian, scientific, and other imported frameworks cannot be taken as "blissfully ignoring the attempts at confrontation" by the protagonists of Christianity (and of science in development projects), as Horton (1982: 223) stated 15 years later when revisiting his earlier thesis. Rather than being ignored, the confrontation seems to be overcome by Sukuma pluralists in what could be called a disjunctive capacity—that of having opposite views co-exist. As Lindquist and Coleman in this issue observed about the Chinese acupuncturist, Sukuma healers have no problem in speaking about their skill in terms of 'a belief' juxtaposed with others when addressing outsiders who are used to biomedical treatment. The pluralism of knowledge systems is implied in their trade. Someone else's disbelief presents no threat.

We notice this difference when compared to the classic accusation of superstition and blasphemy in institutional religion and to similar accusations (or subdued irritations) in science at the ignorance of the uninitiated. In these sanctioned beliefs we find propositions reified from skill, from their practical or emotional source. I call these 'believed beliefs' because of the additional choice to believe in them. The choice makes for cloaked passion, which simmers to the surface in moments of confrontation brought about by alternative views. The tension may be smaller with adherents to a pluralist epistemology.¹

Much cultural misunderstanding can be expected from confounding magical beliefs with believed beliefs. The Western arrogance about modern science and technology has tempted some people to switch poles of allegiance and promote belief against knowledge, as in the post-Enlightenment rhetoric critically termed "inverted Platonism" by Lambek (2000) and better known under the label of New Age. Another reaction to positivism would be to level all cultural

practices ‘down’ to beliefs, which is to place science and religion on a par, or, conversely, to level all cultural practices ‘up’ to forms of knowledge, which comes down to the same thing. Both reinforce the relativist tradition of cultural anthropology. Yet this tradition requires an act of faith with ethical overtones that I for one could never agree with. For example, it presumes the witchcraft tribunal to hold a truth of its own (Myhre 2006; Shweder 2006). Surely, we are able enough today to acknowledge the human processes of delusion at play, if not regarding the witch-hunt in Africa, then at least with regard to the witches burned at the stake in medieval Europe. Pluralism should not go so far as to deny the empirical procedures of verification in scientific knowledge that religious beliefs indeed have no interest in.

What option remains? Since the 1970s the compromise has been the just suggested seemingly neutral stance of segregating knowledge and belief, of stressing the performative as opposed to the propositional force of religion and ritual (Tambiah 1979). But the price for thus safeguarding religion from positivist reduction has been to deny the obvious. Any religious practice has a propositional kernel, no matter how diffuse and elementary (for instance, the presence of spirits felt by the possessed). And vice versa, the segregation has muffled away the intuitive (Whitehead 1929) or performative side of science (Latour 1993). Hence, despite its merit in preventing positivists from rejecting all belief as irrational, in practice our academic segregation has put knowledge and belief in opposition again, as if they could not be combined. The solution I propose in the next section is to relate the two.

The Uncertainty of Access: Magic and Divination

My main argument is that the simple opposition of knowledge and belief overlooks a third category: beliefs that carry within themselves the knowledge of not being knowledge—well, at least not entirely. Crucial in this respect will be to demonstrate that Sukuma users of magic take into account the contingency involved in magic through the application of a thing called *shingila* (access), the metaphorical additive in every recipe. Medicinal interventions are not considered knowledge in the way that other technology is, such as a hoe or a spoon, whose workings are transparent.

Given the importance attached by Sukuma to magical practices, it may strike the reader as counter-intuitive to classify these together with postmodern reflexive behavior (note for now that I do not actually equate both, since postmodern reflexivity retains the modern pretension of an ultimate, truthful position). Readers will not deny that magical recipes are hybrid, easily integrating foreign and modern ingredients. But the belief in magic, they might reason, should be unconditional in order for it to motivate action. I argue that an emphasis on practical purpose is precisely what distinguishes magical belief from religious credo. No effort is made to believe in the medicinal beliefs and concoctions learned. Magic is a this-worldly affair, as ethnographers know. Any adult Sukuma with a family is supposed to have basic knowledge of magical

recipes for curing (*kulagula*), protection (*lukago*), and attraction (*samba*). Contrary to religious credo, these recipes are expected to work, to intervene with natural events, but with the added condition that empirical verification of their efficacy is hard to achieve.

Testimony to this practical expectation among Sukuma is the continual innovation of magical recipes. Therein lies the caveat of associating magic with tradition. Far from being respected as time-honored traditions, old recipes are deserted for having become common knowledge and hence bound to be currently anticipated in the witch's attack. Healers spend a great deal of time traveling in the country to find countermeasures adapted to incoming new forms of witchcraft. In the healer's compound where I worked for about two years, my host, despite his old age, continued to consult with colleagues to learn about foreign healing traditions, typically from neighboring peoples in the east in matters of divination and from the west (*ng'weli*) as far as Congo for concoctions. The employed exotic or rare ingredients would have the necessary sophistication to outwit today's witches. But nothing is certain, it remained understood.

The same goes for divination. No Sukuma excludes the possibility of witches invisibly intervening to corrupt the outcome of an oracle. Innocent people might be identified as witches. Clients go to remote villages to find diviners without inside information and double-check their conclusions with yet other diviners, supposedly unaware of each other's diagnosis. New techniques to purify oracular objects from occult influence are introduced, such as their submersion in water or their passage through tilled mounds of earth. In chicken divination, the ancestral spirit should show its presence through an internal blood mark on the spleen called 'canoe seat' (announcing the start of the oracular trip). But none of these rituals offers the ultimate guarantee. Only through an unwarranted act of faith will the client ascribe to an oracle the kind of truth envisaged in modern courts of law. Hence, in both divination and magic we are dealing with this-worldly practices of a special kind: they present certainty within a frame (or structure) of uncertainty. The content of Sukuma oracles teems with facts and causes, rather than hopes and desires. But the 'subjunctivity' of the latter two, to use a central concept of Susan Reynolds Whyte (1997) on divination, does dominate on the intersubjective, experiential level where the compound of content and frame counts.

Sukuma do not relate to magic as they do to utensils. They are aware that a love potion, as opposed to a spoon or hoe, may not produce a successful result. That is why, unlike the hoe or spoon, the magical recipe contains a sacrificial, summoning dimension wherein the magic's purpose or wish is conveyed. The Sukuma call this additional ingredient *shingila*, which is often a substance with metaphorical significance expressing the purpose of the medicine or the identity of the beneficiary (see Cory 1949). In afflictions of the stomach or cases of poisoning, the *shingila* could be a piece of broom added to the plant medicine that is 'cleaning' the stomach. The additive illustrates the awareness among Sukuma of the unpredictable side of life—a side that is for the worse in witchcraft but for the better in healing. The piece of broom is the exclamation mark or 'please' in one's command to a heavily tried stomach to beat the odds and get better anyway.

The *shingila* embodies a disjunctive capacity that countermands positivists situating non-Western knowledge on the non-empirical side of their divide. Magical access takes into account the possibility of not knowing. As famously illustrated by Evans-Pritchard ([1937] 1976) on the wounded Zande boy shifting attention from the fall to the mysterious cause for his distraction, and by Monica Wilson (1951) on the Pondo teacher asking who sent the infected louse, magic deals with the ‘why’ of affliction, a question considered unscientific by doctors who specialize in the ‘how’. The question no less preoccupies patients in the West wondering about fate (or more formally, theodicy).

Implied by this third category—that is, magic—is a fourth: beliefs that carry within themselves awareness of not being knowledge but that are nevertheless embraced as such. These are what I call ‘believed beliefs’. They are treated as knowledge while escaping the empirical verification required by knowledge. Here belongs the leap of faith toward the propositions imposed by denominations on their followers. I am tempted to speak of modern religions in the broad sense, referring to all monotheistic religions that sanction beliefs. Given the leap—namely, the denial of uncertainty in this fourth category—we may expect intense emotions to be involved, as in defensiveness about these beliefs. This defensiveness, absent in any propositions about the supernatural or magic among the farmers and healers I worked with, surfaces even in modern science, at least going by the passion marking the so-called science wars and the deep tension in recent debates about evolution theory. By this I do not mean that all propositions felt as knowledge in the natural sciences would in fact be a mere form of belief. We know that the earth is not flat. Anyone objecting will more likely cause laughter than fury. But defensiveness does appear where certainty is not achievable yet acceptance is required. An example is the very principle on which all scientific research rests, summed up by Monod (1971): nature needs nothing external to it to explain nature (i.e., chance rules). It is a belief, yet not one that could be opposed (like *doxa*) to knowledge for it cannot be disproved. Like divine intervention, it is an unfalsifiable belief. Scientists take the performative step of believing this belief. Precisely because of its vulnerability, rejection is liable to irritate, if not cause fury.

Now here comes the surprising thing. Believed beliefs seem modern in their orientation on truth and in their distrust of unreflected internalized belief, and yet I could think of no better way to describe the special kind of logic I encountered in healer compounds, more exactly, among Sukuma who had fallen seriously ill and suspected a witch, usually someone of close kin, sometimes even as dear to them as their mother or wife. Far from antithetical to the scientist’s position, the bewitched patient has the particular tendency to look for an explanation, reconstructing what cannot be perceived directly and what no socialized belief from daily life can concretely fill in. The personal need to identify the cause of evil, combined with the mentioned uncertainty of the witch’s identity in oracles, requires a performative leap that makes for emotional, defensive discourse about one’s inner belief, *in casu* suspicion of a jealous other. Exceptionally, the emotion spills over in killing the person who has been identified on such feeble evidence. In these believed beliefs we are witnessing convictions of truth

sufficiently intense to base rational actions on. The discipline they require to believe radically in invented categories reminds us of other explanatory models for crisis, such as ‘Jew’ or ‘Tutsi’. Hence, constructs of the witch represent the very opposite of magical practices, which require disjunctive capacity.

Let me quickly sum up. I related belief and knowledge by considering their implied counterparts: not believing and not knowing. A common strategy has been to occlude this quaternary structure and focus on knowledge without belief (e.g., the earth is not flat) versus belief without knowledge (e.g., socialized norms and values). As a result, the debate has overlooked the two other combinations that this article will examine further: the kind of knowledge that integrates the possibility of not knowing (e.g., magical recipes) and the kind of belief that integrates the possibility of disbelief and therefore becomes believed belief (e.g., in God or in the scientist’s pure chance). Whereas magic constitutes the middle ground of everyday practice in Sukuma society and is kept peripheral in the West, believed belief grounds Western institutions from church to school and also exists among Sukuma, albeit marginally—that is, it is called on only in times of trouble when explanations are needed. To emphasize the difference with the believed belief of science and religion, I insist that it is not because Sukuma believe in the possibility of witchcraft that they would spend their lives feeling persecuted by people who are willing to secretly poison them and would be able to do so effectively. Witches are supposed to form a hidden minority, bound to remain anonymous. Before a witch becomes a concrete agent in one’s life, a change in the intersubjective context and the corresponding structure of experience must have taken place, as I show next.

Against Practice, against Belief

Per’s remark about disbelief was the missing piece of the puzzle. The contrast between Sukuma and Western epistemology summed up what I had felt all along to be wrong about my ethnographic collection of cultural beliefs. The study of culture in terms of beliefs is too static, suggesting a timeless symbolic order that disregards continuous change and the possibility of opposite ideas being held in a culture, even by the same individual. The study presents culture as a program, existing by virtue of the socialization that reproduces it. My remark goes further than what any sociologist will agree on. Indeed, internalization needs to be externalized; thus, beliefs never cease to change and encounter some slippage, as Berger and Luckmann (1973) noted. Or as Bourdieu (1980) put it, our both structured and structuring habitus always interacts with the social field we move in. What these authors downplay is a naked fact complementary to—and as important as—socialization: culture needs to be invented by experiencing subjects for it to exist. Let me clarify this by casting the net wider.

If hard-pressed to tell their audience what their unit of study is, most ethnographers will describe it as practices and gladly avoid saying beliefs. The latter unit has a more subjective ring to it. But shifting the unit of analysis from belief to practice, as advocated by the praxiological turn of Bourdieu, among others, is

no advance either. With the wisdom combined from Geertz's (1973) interpretive method and Clifford's (1988) work on ethnographic writing, we should know that what will be written down cannot be the practices themselves, but must be the ethnographer's belief of what she saw and what people told her they believed they were doing or, more exactly, what she believed people were telling her. Focus on praxis feigns objectivity. Its student would have the benefit of considering only what is observable and thus avoid overinterpretation. The problem with praxis in studying practices of divination, witchcraft, spirit possession, and magic is that it fails to show their commonalities (after all, each practice is objectively different) as well as their differences (the mentioned practices are always classified together as occult). In short, there is no way of acknowledging opposite meanings when making an abstraction of subjectivity.

Both practice and belief offer an approach to culture that fails to capture the experiential layers in meaning-making, especially in something as emotionally complex as witchcraft. What will we learn from calling healers 'witches' or 'sorcerers' and from extending their healing rituals to mean 'sorcery', as has been the case in recent studies? What semantic clarification about the witch can we hope to obtain from studying magic, which partakes, as I have said, of daily life? It can only turn things upside down and wrongly portray Sukuma everyday life as occult. This tendency has in the last decade unfortunately characterized witchcraft studies. These studies have attracted a large audience in the West and among the African elite by replaying the continent's 'heart of darkness' theme, but quite unfortunately without Conrad's reference to the human condition. The good ethnographic intentions of conveying post-colonial disorder and poverty have been counter-productive, precisely because we have obscured the universal side of culture, the experiential and the structural in *anthropos*. The reason for my interest in experiential structure is not just that our study of other cultures would be impossible without something recognizable across cultures (including the author's culture). Experiential structure is the only effective way to go beyond oppositions such as modern/traditional or Western/non-Western. I will argue next that what looks modern may turn out to refer to a basic way of meaning-making that may be encountered anywhere in the world but that is institutionally stimulated in certain societies. These societies are called 'modern' because of the dominance of that one particular way of experiencing the world.

To convince the reader that experiential structure might point the way, while belief is as misleading a concept as practice, I cannot think of a better illustration than the following. The healers I worked with had introduced *sengi*, the paternal aunt, to me as the primordial witch among the Sukuma. Taken as a belief proper to this culture, one could expect the killing of paternal aunts as a logical action to follow. The problem of the belief concept shows in the absurdity of this expectation. Since any woman is a paternal aunt to someone, we are basically talking about the extinction of the Sukuma population, which should have taken place long ago. Hence, what *sengi* refers to is not a socialized belief. It is an idea emerging from a certain situation, depending on the way that situation is experienced by the subject. The question is now posed in terms of altered social conditions and imagination, generative structure, and sources of

creativity: in such a culture and such a particular structure of experience, *in casu* inexplicable illness, the paternal aunt will be one of the most likely figures to arise as one's witch.

Constructing the witch is a practice in its own right with an entirely different experiential condition—hence meaning—attached to it than that of using magic. The ethnography in the following two sections should clarify further that the concoctions anybody employs arise from a different mind-set than witchcraft discourse. Hence, however tempting it may be praxiologically, the one should not be subsumed under the other. For this we must consider the experiential roots of practices. The whole point of Sukuma discourse on the witch is the secrecy and anonymity of that figure, as opposed to the concrete users of magic that all Sukuma are. The witch's meaning lies in the eyes of the beholder. Whether or not poisoning took place in practice, the supposed victim is at the origin of the idea and thus should be the one to address in our determining the meaning of the witch. Only confusion will follow when treating the witch, this figure known as 'the piercing gaze' (*ngwiboneeji*), on a par with concrete actors such as healers (as in analyses following the often heard premise that those who can do good, can do evil too). Only confusion will follow if one ignores subjective experience and its shifts and instead approaches the phenomenon in terms of the actual practices of magic or sorcery, as did Malinowski long ago and many ever since.

Experiential Structures in Culture

Belief and practice are two problematic angles into culture because they deny the experiential plurality in society that determines meanings. Simplified, here is the formula of the social sciences: culture (macro) -> experience (micro). Little is said of the reverse influence: experience -> culture. Psychology and biology talk of it in terms of dispositions and neurons, but do so at the price of denying culture a proper role, that is, by paying the price of a semantically much impoverished picture. To maintain a two-way approach from the outset, I propose to look for the interface of culture and experience, which is some kind of structure, and proceed from both sides of the equation.

While we cannot discern structures of experience directly, we may derive them from what they produce, culturally and experientially. For that purpose, however, we should take content seriously and explore the deeper meaning of someone's belief in *sengi* as witch. In contrast, cognitive anthropologists have considered content as arbitrary, except for its potential for cultural transmission (cf. Atran 2004; Sperber 1996). And so they too begged the *in se* cognitive question as to where an idea, perception, or intention should be located, and from where its particular and universal subjective qualities come. Healers, I will argue, do locate meaning somewhere.

The structure of experience can be inferred from the ideas that it generates. One such idea, we have seen, is that of the paternal aunt incarnating evil in a patrilineal culture with high bride wealth. What experiential features does

she possess? The paternal aunt is both an insider, as kin, and an outsider, as a bride married out (*ngwinga*). Together these features outline a figure of intrusion. The witch is called ‘hot’ (*nsebu*). The motive of the witch is supposed to be envy. However, envy is specified in a manner that has moral overtones: she would be claiming ‘the cattle of her lap’, which refers to the bride wealth of cattle that went to her father and allowed her brother to marry and have lawful children now continuing the clan. She, on the other hand, entered the impoverished family of her husband as a stranger. Does this render her nephew’s death as compensation thinkable? Normally it should not, since the bride just does her duty. She applies the custom, which guarantees that her sacrifice should not be mistaken for a gift, providing her with credit. However, those coping with illness or mourning do reinterpret the bride’s sacrifice in terms of a gift. As she is the very enabler of the alliance between clans (the enabler stands outside the alliance), her sudden intrusion in the system evokes a bottomless debt for those benefiting from her sacrifice. Through this shift of meaning, patients experience their shattered world, which includes the probability of their death.

What have we obtained? Not a belief. Not some symbolic fragment that one group socializes and another does not. The constructed idea of the witch partakes of an enfolded reality that is at the same time biological, social, and psychological. We have obtained an experiential structure, one I tentatively call ‘intrusion’. It lives in the minds and bodies of victims of crisis, in their interactions, and in the other matter they produce, such as the anxiety expressed in black counter-magic and in oracles, as we will see. Remarkably, Westerners may well agree (perhaps better than most Sukuma) with the logic of the victims who suddenly free themselves from traditional rules governing a woman’s duty and instead insist on the injustice done to her, *in casu* the paternal aunt. The pure logic of compensation characterizes our economic system (or science’s alpha and omega—the second law of thermodynamics). Fetishes materialize the pure law of tit for tat, of trading a life for a life. Is that not the principle that rules both the market system and the mind of the victim contemplating death? Both colonizer and colonized called a fetish the contract between absolute strangers that ensured debt and credit through intimidation (Graeber 2001). Like the Greek *symbolon*, meaning ‘to throw together’ or ‘to coincide’, as the two parties of a contract do, the fetish is a token emptied of intrinsic meaning, purified from cultural norms and brought down to the coincidence of convention. To return to the Sukuma construct of the witch, the very idea of the bride demanding compensation breaks with local customs of alliance. Do the Sukuma bewitched not in fact shift toward a concept of gender relations (well known to the West) that resists any norms intervening with the logical purity of equating man and woman? This shift in meaning during witch construction is a flesh-and-blood matter. It far exceeds a belief or some other immaterial symbolic construct of culture in separation from nature. Here meaning comes across as a form of matter.

The approach I am proposing approximates that of healers: the body heals through meanings. This seems to me the only way that the application of magic could be comprehensible. Besides curative plants that directly affect the body, the magical recipe contains *shingila*, additives for access. The ingredients

communicate meanings both to the user (who has been initiated to prepare the medicine) and to the natural and social environment. Whether or not healers are right to expect such access, magic in any case affects the user through the meanings that the body receives from the perceived objects and related ritual acts. A short example will illustrate that communication with the environment is intrinsic to the magic's recipe and ingredients. The recipes reflect the inventor's mastery of finding the right meaning—indeed, access—that would synaesthetically couple the perceived object with a particular intended sensation. Moreover, the recipes are linguistically structured.

I witnessed the following example the evening before my Sukuma host sowed the land. He used *lukago*, the protective type of magic that normally involves no curative elements or empirical knowledge of that kind. To protect the maize seeds against thieves and attacks of sorcery, he first roasted some in a black potsherd. The black color and the potsherd evoke lethal counterattack. The roasted seeds were then mixed with a tiny piece of elephant's trunk as *shingila*, in this case referring to the magic's destined party—'any perpetrators' (reminiscent of elephants destroying the field). After being ground, the seeds were mixed with drinking water that had been standing in the house. The concoction was used to draw a cross at the threshold and anoint the other maize seeds. The pile was poured in a bowl placed on a *lugobi* ring (for carrying loads on the head), which was made of weeds growing at intersections. The household head undressed, put on an ancestral amulet, and carried the bowl on his head as he furtively left to sow the seeds in his fields.

Step by step, not unlike African patterns of decoration and architecture (cf. Eglash 1999: 17), my host replicated the same structure in a fractal loop, whereby each output resulting from input combined with access became input for the next access. Through prefixes and suffixes built around a stem, Bantu languages can compose virtually any concept. In the same way, the magical recipe composes its purpose. Each ingredient conveys a part of the message, the totality of which would sound more or less as follows: "Through this magic secretly administered, any perpetrator of fields that belong to my house will incur the spell of the ancestors who joined forces at the threshold of my house." The recipe thus talks to the environment. Language itself is a coupling of sounds (or other sensory data) with meaning. The human organism has learned to experience the latter when perceiving the former. Magic appears to be a special case in which the sensory data synaesthetically reinforce the intended meanings so that the user's body-mind and the other participants undergo a beneficial effect at application.

The principle of magic is reciprocity in relation to the environment. The ingredients articulate some of the anxiety and aggression characterizing affliction, but the condition of possibility for magical recipes is communication with the outside world. Witch constructs, on the contrary, are more often suspicions kept silent rather than expressed. Their logic revolves around a sense of intrusion, an inability to keep the outside at a manageable, pleasantly enchanting, and enriching distance. So we begin to differentiate two experiential structures.

This is how my essay fits within this volume's theme entitled 'Against Belief?'. Whereas belief tends to oppose cultures (believers versus non-believers in magic), the structure of experience can link up seemingly distinct practices from different cultures (witch construction and anti-Semitism) while differentiating seemingly similar practices (witch construction and magic, both 'occult') within a culture. Although practices and ideas may lose much of their semantic specificity when structured, we at least get to comprehend why certain practices, broadly defined in such structural terms, persist the world over, without contact accounting for it. As much as it is socialized in Sukuma society today, divinatory action was invented too, and is being invented again, by Europeans in experiential contexts that call for it (think of 'heads or tails' in a dilemma). Situations have common structures at the enfolded comprehensive level before being divided into the biological, the social, and the psychological. I thus regard experiential structures as 'softly' universal. They cannot be reduced to any of these three objects of research.

The Collective Reason of Oracles

Little insight can be expected from approaching magic with the scientific standards to which modern states commit themselves in order to implement decisions with systematic and massive impact. Sukuma remedies rather seem to have an interactive, expressive purpose. Truth and action do not feature centrally in oracles either. What would it mean if oracles had a truth claim not unlike modern tribunals, and thus every identified witch would be executed? A quick calculation should suffice. About a thousand Sukuma villages with, on average, two diviners, each having about two clients a day and half of these diagnosing witchcraft (the other half concerning matters of economic fortune), would yield an annual killing of over 300,000 (innocent) people. The Sukuma population should have been decimated by now if this reasoning were correct. It will not surprise the reader that no such demographic bias in mortality or gender exists. In his classic volume about Azande witchcraft, Evans-Pritchard ([1937] 1976: 86) attributed the relatively peaceful outcomes among others to the diviners' preference to avoid direct statements in public. We will observe next that Sukuma expect the statements by diviners (who prefer private consultations) to be unambiguous. What prevents mass murder is not vagueness but the mentioned frame or experiential structure of enfolded uncertainty that implicitly accompanies clear-cut statements.

The point of divination is not truth but therapy. The explanation and identification of evil serve to make people feel better rather than to provoke retaliatory action. I do not exclude that violent sort of action, but the statistics alone show that this cannot be the primary result of divination. We are confronted with the same absurdity as that of the belief in *sengi* as witch. The absurdity follows from equating culture with practice, belief, and socialization. I propose experiential structure instead. The source of creativity, which inspired the mythical first inventors and again their descendants today, accounts better for the (re)generation of their practices.

Divination, its setting and symbolics, exhibits yet another intersubjective structure of experience. It counters the situation of anxiety and affliction that generated the construct of the witch, a horribly intrusive, guilt-inducing figure whose moralizing gaze could be destroyed only through psychotic-systematic slashes of the machete cutting the body into bits and pieces. From qualitative fieldwork since 1995, I know witch killing to be extremely rare in Sukuma villages and homicide in general to be very low compared to other places in the world—contrary to ongoing speculations about Sukuma witch killings (see, e.g., Green and Mesaki 2005). Based on my training as a chicken diviner and 20 or so mediumistic consultations in the healer's compound where I worked (and others collected by Sukuma informants), a few recurring traits can be discerned: (1) the client is in a state of crisis, broadly conceived (e.g., illness or ill relatives, misfortune, social conflict); (2) the diviner's oracle (his trance or a bird's organs) must be able to invoke this state and describe it as accurately as possible; and (3) the oracle must have surplus value over consultations with wise elders (and over the symbolic negotiations in daily life) in that it introduces an external reality, such as the ancestral spirit or something else normally silent, that is now announced through mediumistic means. What this boils down to is that divination hinges on the client's experiential structure of intrusion to stimulate subsequently a transformation, an experiential shift away from the crisis and into redress of a dynamic social order, materialized in the wish to exchange with the ancestors and the social group (and if necessary, to magically compete with other individuals like everybody else). At the very moment of having the ancestral spirit 'arrive' (*washikilwa*)² and address the client (in chicken divination the ancestor or 'eye' shows itself in a mark on the spleen), two things happen at once with as much social as psycho-biological relevance. First, the feeling of isolation, of 'the world' turning against oneself and intruding, disappears as the guiding spirit breaks the silence and sides with the victim in order to diagnose the problem. Second, thus identified, the witch changes from the intrusive gaze one silently suspects (e.g., 'the neighbors' or 'kin' whose moral credit weakens ancestral protection and renders the attack lethal) into a concrete other, accusable or amenable to magical combat. Precisely because the client feels part of society again and retrieves the disjunctive capacity proper to the user of magic—namely, of having opposite possibilities co-exist (e.g., X is identified as my witch but may well not be; my magic works but may well not)—he or she will commonly not resort to violence but will instead be satisfied with using protective counter-magic against the identified witch.

The analysis is admittedly ideal-typical, as variants abound. But it should be indicative enough to place in serious doubt the common supposition that divination is pivotal in witch-hunts and in the killing of innocent people. Regional authorities in Tanzania have banned the practice for that reason. The assumption lives on in our discipline too. My description of witch identification in divination and of its (non-rational) mediumistic source was not exactly welcomed by my colleagues, because their strategy in defending our objects of study had been the opposite—to present the outcome of oracles as inconclusive and ultimately embedded in the wisdom of elders. Rather than in the oracle itself, which is violent, I situate the factor mitigating violence in the local interpretation

of oracles and, more exactly, in the divinatory structure of experience. The Sukuma diviners and clients I worked with seemed able to accept existential uncertainty, something that no modern technology can remedy and that has perhaps therefore kept magic in place the world over.

Intrusion, magic, and divination are different ways of reworking crisis through meaning (metaphor) and matter (recipes, feelings).³ Moments of intrusion certainly occur in divination. The oracle does not hide details about dark motives and intense emotions that are preferably kept silent in everyday discourse. An internal blood mark on the chick's knee signifies 'genuflection', which—combined with a mark at a certain feather—points to particular female kin. I sometimes compare divination to a thriller that the client watches but (unlike in the movies) ends up playing the leading part in. Do not expect the diviner to back down. Should they doubt the oracle, clients are even entitled to ask for their money back. The following fragments from a recorded mediumistic divination continue the session our discussion started with. These illustrate that the client is spared no detail. During 40 minutes of séance the diviner has talked in questions and answers to determine the problem. Directive, non-verbal, or verbal hints are common toward the end. As the diviner recounts in a staccato voice his ever clearer vision of what happened to the client (addressed in the third person) the session builds up toward a climax dedicated to finding the witch and the motive. Then continues an open discussion between the diviner and the client about the outcome:

Diviner: It's not that the whole compound conspires against you until you leave ... Don't think that it is because you are a drinker that your protectors [*ndagu*, ancestral guides] have been destroyed. They have been destroyed at a crossroads. Even if you come tomorrow with a chicken [to divine], I will tell you it is that piece of land. That is the point of your oracle. Your heart palpates. Why so much? "Maybe my senior wife." No. "Maybe the junior one." No. Just follow up on the owner of that field you are fighting over; and your sister-in-law is in on that matter.

Client: To the extent that both have set me up to step on the poison.

Diviner: I have screamed out that this magic at the feet spreads until covering the whole body!

Client: What did you say about vomiting?

Diviner: I said your heart got polluted so that you vomited, resembling the Ndukakuki type of bewitchment. That is the matter. Or maybe with the vomiting came hiccups.

Client: That is how it is exactly.

Diviner: ... But what could kill you is that plot and the sister-in-law involved. If you take a machete, well, I am not in it.

Client: What machete, just look for medicine, right? I should take what machete, eh, just medicine?

Diviner: Don't you see, we try to scare those mothers [witches] so that they do not sacrifice you. There are some, you see them listening to the obituaries on the radio just to go to such gatherings.

Client: Yes, so we better joke about it all.

Diviner: But there really is truth in it! Wake up from your slumber and search. Accept that you are being fooled. It can prevent the small ones [children] from dying randomly.

Client: I just ask for a way to live without trouble.

Diviner: The road to remedy, I told you, is that they [healers] extract that *ndagu* spell from you; not by drawing blood but by medicine applied at a well-trodden patch of your land facing west.

More than one suggestion is made by the diviner that could be interpreted as justifying violence against a probably innocent sister-in-law. Does it not stand to reason, then, that divination would be forbidden and the diviner arrested for inciting violence? This reason that individuals are applying in all its apparent Cartesian purity, it pains me to insist, ignores the collective reason that practices have (e.g., expressing suspicions can yield a satisfaction in its own right). I have attempted to discern the collective reason of practices through their experiential structure. Sukuma usually do not appear to treat the propositions both in the diviner's oracle and in the patient's earlier witch construct as facts to base action on, such as witch killing. The witch construct emanates from the patient's shifted perspective. Divination concentrates on this shift in frame or structure—beneath/beyond its actual content that fascinates or shocks the outsider. The oracle pieces together an identifiable evil (often the same person suspected earlier by the patient) and in that way appears to set off the beginnings of therapy and one's return to society. These largely unconscious benefits that keep practices in place will be missed by rationality arguments. Stronger still, divination has an experiential structure that is not limited to a particular culture. Westerners may not consult diviners, but as I have suggested earlier, the underlying structure spontaneously appears when they seek to end a dilemma. In flipping a coin, do they not hope something good to inform chance? One may assume that they do not mistake this for absolute truth. Well, nor do Sukuma.

Science and Intrusion

From the seemingly absurd belief in *sengi* as witch, I derived a far less absurd structure of experience coined intrusion. This structure of crisis can be found in other cultures as well, such as my own. Think of the kind of content produced at the peak of modernity, whether the 'evil in all good' described in Dracula, Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll, or Freud's Es within, and—why not?—critical social theories such as Habermas's on the system intruding on our life-world. What differs is the frequency by which this meaning emerges or, more exactly, the frequency of the situation of crisis producing it. It has been high in the West, possibly because of institutions sustaining the crisis. That is how I understand the continuous call, internalized in classroom teaching, that we should think critically—literally, that

we should be in a state of crisis. We put ourselves under stress to discipline our experience. We demand from ourselves to be pure rather than pluralistic. We act as a capitalist on the market and as the very opposite at home. Another example of the disciplining and self-bewitchment is our rejection of anything that smacks of belief and the positioning of ourselves as knowing—if not of something certain, then at least of our lack of certainty, as in postmodern relativism. In brief, the best candidate as the source for the believed beliefs characteristic of science and religion is the experiential structure of intrusion that I introduced to account for the construct of the witch. I distinguished this construct from traditional beliefs in magical powers and witches, which survive primarily through socialization. In contrast, the witch construct and religious credo (and the scientist's trust in pure chance) involve the intensity of conviction, as if articulating intrusion and an effort to disconnect from tradition.

Obviously, my argument is not directed against critical thought. On the contrary, I am claiming that the social conditions accompanying the Western regime of knowledge need critique, and ever more of it. Let me clarify this in relation to the old debate on rationality and witchcraft, which has simmered beyond our discipline's confines. In a notorious address from 1974 on the topic of 'cargo cult science', the physicist Richard Feynman (1997) wonders how witch doctors could have existed for so long when little or nothing they proposed worked. Thanks to science, he goes on, we can wonder at all about this today. His lucid remark clashes with one simple fact. Traditional healing practices have far from disappeared—not even a bit—30 years later. Many parts of the world where science and schooling are introduced show an increase in witchcraft suspicions. The field of witchcraft studies has boomed over the last decade. Science has come onto the scene in schools to intervene in the socialization of witchcraft beliefs, yet constructs of the witch continue to surface.

The reason is, as demonstrated above, that these constructs of a crisis exist, not because of socialization and what one has learned, but because of situations with certain experiential structures that give rise to them. The belief in witchcraft may disappear over time, but not the social procedure of thinking up an explanatory figure of crisis and intrusion. What once was 'witches' may later be 'immigrants' or 'Islam'. The next generation will ask how it could have seemed logical for any of us to blame Iraq for 9/11. The advantage of a Sukuma linking evil to witches is that the latter are invisible enough to keep him or her doubting any ultimate explanation. Existential uncertainty is integrated and implicitly part of how Sukuma experience the witch doctor's oracle. This can hardly be said of how a scientific doctor's statement is taken. Unlike healers almost ludicrously sure of themselves, leaving judgment up to the client, the scientist makes sure to include all possible angles, all buts and mights, in order to be taken literally, word for word like a priest. It may be no coincidence that the witch-hunts in Europe peaked at a time when Bacon's empirical science came into being and truth was opposed to the idols of unreflected belief. In that transitional phase the 'possible' witch became a 'true' witch.

Still, the obsession with verification, establishing 'believed belief', was the key to meticulous progress. Experiments are made valid by systematically ruling

out impurities, leaving in place natural causes to which events can be attributed. For all the rhetoric about moderns being tragic heroes who have given up magic to come to terms with reality and live with contingency (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994), the reality of modern thought is a belief in pure reason and a segregation from the contingency of nature. On this efficient separation we base truths and guide entire societies into concomitant actions. So we had better make sure to get all the facts right and to keep on thinking critically, or the consequences might be disastrous. I am not referring just to the witch-hunts in Europe, when believed beliefs were wrong, or to the increased suspicions among educated Africans, occasionally spilling over in actual killings. Another example of believing that all the facts are covered is industrial technology. If only scientists would have been more critical of themselves and realized the larger context of nature, they might have prevented the global warming that this technology has caused (not to speak of the tragic socio-economic context to which their knowledge did not attempt to reconnect either). Therefore, as I stated about critique being both the origin of and a continuing necessity for modernity, the consequences of explanatory models (determining also who/what to blame) are most grave once the procedure is considered pure. In contrast, the magical attitude toward medicine and divining has advantages in terms of risk and scale of calamity.

Conclusion

My focus has been on what generates an idea and structures a thought. Whether a belief is true or false matters less than what people feel like believing in a given situation. Feeling refers to a bodily event. The experiential structures are bodily and so are the beliefs they generate. Irrespective of truth-value, certain beliefs go hand in hand with certain bodily states. The magical recipe compiles meanings, in the form of perceptions of ingredients and objects, to physically affect the patient. Meaning is matter and hence can heal. The example above of a desire conveyed through magical ingredients consists of cues by which the healer carves out chunks of consciousness relevant for the patient's betterment. The words and objects are like carefully selected notes alternating with silence. Just as these become music, thanks to the pre-given (socio-psycho-biological) complexity underlying silence, the ingredients of magic can rely on the material roots of meaning. Scientists too must find such cues into consciousness to convey their knowledge. But because of the empirical basis of their knowledge, they are more tempted to downplay the cues (known as 'culture' and 'meaning') and concentrate on the laws of nature as if communicating these directly.

The scientist fishes in the same pond of meaning as the healer. The healer, though, is content with the interactive purpose of magic to reach the social and natural environment, and to have this cue physically empower participants perceiving the ingredients and objects employed. It behooves a reciprocal attitude toward the environment not to expect more. The scientist instead divides subject and object and presents nature as an object, without becoming

distracted by the employed cues and meanings and what good they might do for humans. Yet no matter how irrelevant to the scientist's purpose, his or her theories also establish a symbiosis of mind and body. We observe it daily in our society. Merciless in relation to socialized belief and privileging the intrusive structure of critique and believed belief, the irrefutable efficiency of our science and technology conveys a message, over and over again, whose meaning does not necessarily make anyone feel better.

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Notes

1. The question remains as to whether this very epistemology also makes those adherents more vulnerable to the disintegration of local beliefs, something that Lévi-Strauss (1955: 448) professed to come about with our ethnographic interviews and that would reveal anthropology to be an entropology in real time.
2. See also our term 'contingency', derived from the Latin *contingere* (to arrive).
3. Another form is the love of intrusion in spirit possession (cf. Stroeken 2006).

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